

SN. 09/651,654

ATTORNEY DOCKET NO. CANO:013

REMARKS

Claims 1-18 remain pending in this application for which applicant seeks reconsideration.

Interview

Applicant sought an interview with the examiner, but was unsuccessful because the application was not readily available to the examiner. Applicant still seeks an interview as soon as the file becomes available to the examiner (should the examiner decide to maintain the same rejection).

Art Rejection

Claims 1-18 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as anticipated by Sano (USP 5,038,379). In the previous reply, applicant explained that Sano would not have disclosed or taught rearranging the searched images according to the "importance" of the keywords in relation to the image content. In this respect, the examiner argues as follows:

1. Sano teaches searching a desired image information using a desired key word from a second data base and while relating the search information between first and second data bases, relying on column 2, lines 45-52, *et seq.*
2. Sano teaches discriminating information to discriminate the image information from a plurality of image information of the same group from another image information, relying on column 2, lines 58-61, *et seq.*

Again, the examiner appears to miss or not understand the key feature of the present invention. Claim 1 calls for search means for searching for keywords corresponding to images to be searched and rearranging means for rearranging images corresponding to the keywords searched by the search means **according to the importance of the keywords in relation to the content of the images being searched.** [Emphasis added]. Other independent claims recite similar or parallel features. According to the present invention, keywords are assigned to image data correspondingly to the importance based on the content of the images being searched, and the search results (images) are arranged according to the importance based on the content of the

SN. 09/651,654

ATTORNEY DOCKET NO. CANO:013

images in relation to the search keyword.

It is precisely this feature that Sano fails to teach. The examiner should note that the importance is not assigned to the keywords themselves, but rather to the relationship between the keyword and the content of the images. For example, images depicting an "apple" (keyword) can have different degrees of importance, depending on how the apple is depicted within the image. For example, if the image predominantly depicts or highlights an apple, a higher degree of importance can be assigned to that image than another image depicting an apple hanging from a tree or not as prominently depicted. Sano does not disclose or teach a way of ordering the images based on the degree of importance. That is, Sano does not disclose discriminating between different images depicting the image of the same keyword.

Sano discloses an image information searching apparatus that converts a scanned image to a character recognized by OCR, stores the character code corresponding to the image into a database, and displays the document image corresponding to the character resulting from a keyword search thereof. See column 5, lines 5-21. Sano does not teach assigning importance of keyword in relation to the image content. In Sano, the image data assigned to an input keyword is output so that the user can search a smaller set (discriminated images) from the images stored in its database. The greater the number of images the database contains, the greater the number of images output. But Sano does not disclose rearranging the output images according to the assigned importance.

The first passage (column 2, lines 45, *et seq.*) identified by the examiner merely states that a second database is related to the image so that the search can be corrected:

The invention also intends to provide an apparatus which can correct the search information to a desired key word (search information) such that the user can easily search a desired image information, namely an apparatus which can seemingly correct the search information to the search information between the second data base and the user while keeping with the search information as it is between the first and second data base.

The second passage (column 2, lines 45, *et seq.*) identified by the examiner merely states that

SN. 09/651,654

ATTORNEY DOCKET NO. CANO:013

searched images can be discriminated from the images that are not assigned with the same keyword. That is, it merely states that the search hits can be discriminated from the non-hits:

 this image information including discriminating information to discriminate the image information or a plurality of image information of the same group from another image information.

These passages disclose nothing in the way of rearranging the search results based on the importance of the content of the images.

Moreover, independent claims 3, 9, and 14, call for using a synonym index to find terms of the keyword that represent the same or similar meaning ("keywords closely related in meaning"). Sano further does not disclose or teach this feature. Indeed, Sano discloses using a dictionary having pattern data of characters for checking text during OCR where an image is being converted to text. This is quite different from using a synonym-based index to search for a keyword stored in the database that is different from an input search keyword. These claims further call for assigning priority to an image in relation to both the importance and the accordance. Sano further does not disclose such features.

SN. 09/651,654

ATTORNEY DOCKET NO. CANO:013

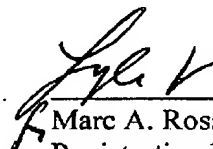
Conclusion

Applicant submits that claims 1-18 patentably distinguish over the applied references. Should the examiner have any issues concerning this reply or any other outstanding issues remaining in this application, applicant urges the examiner to contact the undersigned to expedite prosecution.

Again, should the examiner maintain the same rejection, applicant respectfully urges the examiner to contact the undersigned to schedule an interview.

Respectfully submitted,

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